

Heather Edwards,

### Round the Museums

I'm not normally much interested in museums but, curiously, I find that I've visited no fewer than four local exhibitions this summer.

The first was the Dock Museum at Barrow. I only went because this was where Apparch's annual summer day-trip dropped us on our way to Furness Abbey. But I'm very glad I did because I thought it was quite wonderful. The story of Barrow from its origins as a tiny fishing village to the present-day high-tech manufacturing town is remarkable. The exhibits are fascinating and beautifully-presented, especially the enormous battleship-models. The museum-building, a stunning piece of architecture, is worth a visit in itself. I've been recommending the Dock Museum to all my friends.

Then, a few weeks later, I found myself at a loose-end in Penrith and wandered into the museum at the bottom of Middlegate. I hadn't been there since it was recently refurbished. I now find that it has a room dedicated to pre-history which features a specially-made video developed by our old friend Aaron Watson. This plays on an endless loop on a plasma screen that dominates the exhibition. It is a true work of art. If you've got 15 minutes to spare next time you're in Penrith, do be sure to drop in.

Then I went to Maryport to hear a talk by our local MP. The meeting took place in a newly-equipped Conference room at the Senhouse museum. So at half-time, of course, I took the opportunity to check out the collection. I knew they had a fine collection of Roman altars but no idea just how fine these are. Obviously money is tight, but the curators have been really imaginative and the displays give a vivid and powerful insight into Roman religious and domestic life. I shall go again.

And finally, one place where money has clearly not been an issue is the new Roman Frontiers gallery at Carlisle museum. I actually planned to go here, and paid for my expensive ticket with keen anticipation - this should have been the best exhibition of the four. It wasn't! I don't like to criticise but I hate to see good money wasted. I'd be interested to hear what others think.

Martin Joyce

### Spring Programme

#### AGM and Members' Evening

7.00pm Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January

**Martin Railton** : Altogether Archaeology on Brackenber Moor - Results of the 2011 Excavations at the "*Roman Signal Station*"

**Richard Stevens** : More on Abbeytown - an outlying chapel at Holme St. Cuthbert

#### Great Langdale Axe Factories

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> February

**Gabriel Blamires**

Outline of several possible ancient routeways to the stone axe working sites

#### The Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Project

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March

**Dr Ken Fairless and Jeff Lynn**

#### An Update on "Altogether Archaeology"

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April

**Paul Frodsham, Historic Environment Officer, North Pennines AONB Partnership**

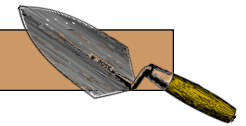


# Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 14 Issue 4

Winter 2011



### Group News

I hope you've noticed a subtle change in your Newsletter. Yes, your Committee has decided that the time has finally come for us to switch to colour! I hope you'll agree that photographs, in particular, have benefited from the change. We've decided to try it for a year, at any rate. Please let us know what you think.

Other changes in the pipeline included proposed amendments to Apparch's Constitution. You should have found details of these enclosed with your Newsletter. The intention is to make the Committee structure easier to manage. If you have any concerns or queries about these changes, we hope that you will bring these up at the AGM in January. An Agenda for the AGM and Minutes for the last meeting are also enclosed.

Finally also, a reminder that subscriptions are due for renewal at the AGM. The Group's costs have been steadily increasing but you will see that we have been able to keep subscription charges unchanged for at least one more year. I hope that you will agree that membership of Appleby Archaeology continues to represent excellent value.

Finally, may I wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for 2012.

Martin Joyce

### Friends of Nine Standards (FONS)

One of our members, Dr Stephen Walker, who has a special interest in the archaeology of Nine Standards Rigg has recently formed a local group to co-ordinate research into the site. We think Apparch members may be interested in this. Stephen writes as follows:

"Two Committee Members of the Upper Eden History Society, Stephen Walker and Dawn Robertson, have formed a loosely-affiliated special interest group called the Friends of the Nine Standards to initiate professional archaeological field research on the Nine Standards drystone cairns on the skyline above Kirkby Stephen. How old are they, who built them, and why? And how do the modern cairns we see today, rebuilt continually over the centuries, relate to the various other archaeological features visible on Nine Standards Rigg? Recently ac-

quired low level oblique aerial photographs, for example, appear to show an enclosure around the summit, with the cairns lying diagonally across it. Is this feature due to lithology as some have claimed, or archaeology? We think it is time to find out.

We therefore need to raise funds and support locally to pay for archaeologists to conduct non-intrusive techniques of investigation, and for laboratory analyses that we ourselves cannot provide. Our target is £6500 and have already raised a third of this.

Further grant applications have been submitted, but funding bodies always want to see evidence of local commitment and enthusiasm for the proposal. So if you would like to help by making a donation, please visit our website



*Snowy Cairns on Nine Standards Rigg*

at [www.ninestandards.eu](http://www.ninestandards.eu). If your interest is serious and you want to be kept informed, you can become a Friend for £50. You will get the latest news and project reports by email or by post. If you want to join in the research, please get in touch via the website."

Stephen Walker



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## Exploring the Archaeology of the Medieval Elite

In Sept nearly 40 members of Appleby Archaeology Group heard Mr Erik Matthews, Society Fieldwork Officer from the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland, give an entertaining and informative talk about recent, and on-going, excavations at Hornby Castle near Bedale, North Yorkshire.

His talk revealed to the audience an interesting and challenging excavation at the site of a medieval castle, the earliest reference to the castle being in 1175.

Erik first became involved in the project 6 years ago on the site of the medieval chapel and Great Hall.

He explained that it was initially intended to be an exploration of post-medieval society from the early 1700's centred around the former Banqueting Hall but, as members heard, events and numerous finds in the castle and grounds conspired to lead to the notion of much earlier occupation of the site.

An outline of the castle's history through the centuries revealed tales of eccentric individuals, diplomatic missions, secret passages, Royal visits including one from James I in about 1614, and a fair degree of elite showing-off.

Erik described, and showed pictures of, some of the very many finds (more than 1500 in total) - the earliest one dating from the late 13th century when the castle was in the ownership of Sir Thomas Burgh. The finds range from pottery pieces and bones to gaming pieces, surgical instruments, musical accessories, glassware and roof tiles.



*James I of England and VI of Scotland*

The discovery of substantial cobbled areas, mortar floors, medieval architectural stonework and a high-status conduit-fed timber water pipe of a type normally associated with monasteries has led several academics to suggest that an early building of some importance had been found and could be a "plaisance" - an area where important guests were entertained away from the main castle.

Erik brought the talk to a close by explaining how the site and its finds are challenging the received wisdom that elite medieval life in Northern England was one lived in fear of the Scots and on the very edge of civilised society in dark and dreary surroundings. Indeed, the lifestyle on offer appears to have been, at this site at least, lavish and very entertaining judging by the 60 wine-jug handles which have been unearthed!

Erik was warmly thanked and enthusiastically applauded, then the audience had an opportunity to ask questions and handle several artefacts from the excavations.

Carol Dougherty



*Hornby Castle in 1880*

## Tortie Tales

On a clear blustery October day in the shadow of the aptly named Cold Fell, an assorted group of people assembled beside a curiously-shaped boulder. Overlooked by the ghosts of the miners who had once toiled the scarred hillside above, volunteers from North Pennines AONB's Altogether Archaeology were meeting to contemplate Project No.7: an investigation of the **Tortie Stone**, an enigmatic cup-marked rock near Hallbankgate.

The projects so far undertaken by AA had been many and varied: aerial photography, uncovering Roman roads, digging 'lost' castles and reconstructing historic mine workings. Why had this particular group come to this remote hillside to spend five days digging and sifting this cold and muddy site?

Throughout the day the energy buzzing round the site never flagged; perhaps it was the desire to make the most of the sunshine and the unusually mild weather, but the enthusiasm never seemed to diminish. Everywhere you looked people were on their knees energetically trowelling or swinging mattocks in a very practised way. What had drawn these people to this remote Cumbrian hillside?

Obviously an interest in archaeology, most had always had a fascination with 'rock art'. Who made it? Why was it there? What did it mean? Unanswerable questions in the main. Many participants had connections with the North East, Durham or Northumberland where such remains have always been known about, accepted as part of the landscape, but their reasons are as many and as varied as the marks on the Tortie Stones. My favourite reason is from Andy who was walking his dog in Westgate earlier in the year and, having got into conversation with Paul Frodsham and expressed an interest in archaeology, was 'kidnapped' to be shown what was then happening at Westgate castle. It was there he heard about the forthcoming rock art project at Tortie and here he was several months later, standing in a shallow trench with a mattock in his hand and explaining to me what had happened on the previous day and what the plan was for excavating around Tortie Stone 2.

For some it wasn't their first stab at trying to extract meaning from the enigmatic stones which dot the northern landscape. Some had spent months on fieldwalking projects to identify and record rock art throughout the region, but most of the volunteers had no previous experience of working with rock art and just wanted to 'learn more about it and how to identify it'.



*The Tortie Stone*

At least half of the volunteers had had a previous experience on some of Altogether Archaeology's other modules and having once experienced the camaraderie of a dig or an extensive fieldwalking project were hooked. It didn't seem to matter if their previous dig had taken place in torrential rain or blazing sunshine. They had often spent their time on a site devoid of artefacts, but whether they had found numerous Roman artefacts sieving the mole-hills at Whitley Castle, Mesolithic flints on Eden Valley's fieldwalking project or absolutely nothing elsewhere, they were still prepared to give their time in helping to unravel the mysteries of the Tortie stone.

Many of the Tortie Stone volunteers had never been on a dig or had any 'hands on' experience of archaeology before had become involved in a variety of ways. Perhaps they had been to an AONB event or read in *North Pennines News* about the initiative and thought it sounded interesting. Some had signed up indicating their interest many months before but had not previously found a project which excited their interest or, given the vast area of narrow winding roads which link distant parts of the North Pennines, had been unable to find a project within comfortable travelling distance of their home. It seems in the North Pennines 'reasonable travelling distance' takes on a different dimension as the average travelling time of Tortie Stone volunteers was between forty-five minutes and one hour. One woman had travelling all the way from Durham City only to miss the turning in Alston and end up at the bottom of Hartside Pass, making her total one-way journey 70 miles. A very dedicated volunteer on her very first dig; her day was made worthwhile by finding one of the few flints uncovered by the excavation. But not everyone came from outside the immediate area. Other people came from much nearer to view the site, pleased that someone was again attempting to find out more about the stones which had puzzled them for generations. One had walked up from Hallbankgate especially to point out on a nearby fell what she was certain was a standing stone of some significance and was hoping to come back and help later in the dig.

Volunteers were not confined to any one age group or sex and this and the variety of occupations, past and present, seems to make Altogether Archaeology a true community experience. It didn't seem to matter whether people had always lived in the North Pennines, whether they had moved here two months or ten years ago people are curious about who lived here before them, where they lived and how they went about their lives. Participation in The Tortie Stone project seems to be perceived as a thread which links them back though the millennia to the first inhabitants of this part of Cumbria establishing a living link between inhabitants past and present.